

News Release

The Challenge to Eat Locally

By Krista Lemos on Tuesday, November 29, 2005

On September 1, 2005, Sunny Johnson and Steve Dahlberg, PhD began a year-long effort to eat locally. What that means is they have committed to eat foods grown within 250 miles of where they live for 365 days in a row. "It is not about a diet," Sunny explains, "eating locally has been a lifestyle change."

Johnson and Dahlberg are members of a group of seven making the commitment. The idea came about 18 months earlier during another meeting and grew into the Local Foods Challenge. Dahlberg teaches biology and math at the White Earth Tribal and Community College (WETCC) and Johnson is a nutrition instructor there. The two recently visited the University of Minnesota, Crookston (UMC) to talk about the Local Foods Challenge and what it means.

The biggest challenge they have encountered is convenience agree Johnson and Dahlberg. "When you choose to eat locally, it takes some preparation and planning," Johnson said. That preparation included "putting up" foods for the winter months. "The end of the growing season meant a great deal of canning, dehydrating, and freezing," explains Dahlberg. However, not all of this work was without its rewards. The two both admit it will be nice not to have to make those weekly trips to the grocery store because they already have their food in stock.

There are several objectives to the idea of eating locally: to decrease the use of fossil fuels, to positively impact the environment by creating less garbage, after all they no longer contend with all the packaging of convenience foods, to strengthen the local community, and to benefit the local economy. The benefits are also personal. Both of them say that their diets now contain greater variety, and they recognize the potential supporting the local producer could have. "If every person bought locally," Johnson said, "it would create such a positive impact on our local economies."

Dahlberg and Johnson are also a part of the Local Foods Partnership, created to connect and enhance resources of the region and the University of Minnesota to develop a sustainable regional community by educating and empowering citizens to explore and act on their ideas.

The goals of this project are to build partnerships with local producers and other advocates of local foods and increase the production, marketing, and sales of locally grown foods in the region. You can learn more about the Local Foods Partnership by visiting <http://localfoods.umn.edu> on the Web. You can use the website to find local producers near you. It is a part of the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, which serves northwest Minnesota by promoting active citizenship; helping the northwest region attain a sustainable future: and building strong partnerships with the University of Minnesota and the region

The Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership connects resources of the region and the University of Minnesota to develop a sustainable regional community by empowering citizens to explore and act on their ideas.

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